

On the Path of the Beloved

Episode 3 :

“Did He not find you an orphan, so He gave (you) an abode?”

All praise be to Allah and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger. Today's lecture is divided into an introduction, a question, the Prophet's childhood, and the period of the Prophet's youth until his marriage.

Introduction

Does any one know how the Prophet (SAWS^[1]) looked? He is described in some books as a man who was moderately tall among his peers, with a white-red-colored complexion, a well proportioned body and deep hair and beard.

There are three narrations giving a very accurate description of the Prophet (SAWS). The first is that of Abdullah Ibn-Salamah, a rabbi who knew much about the final Prophet. He decided to go to the Prophet (SAWS) to test him by asking him ten questions. On his way he saw the Prophet (SAWS) and without asking a single question he said, "This is the Prophet of Allah, this face is not the face of a liar."

The second narration is that of Jabir Ibn-Abdullah. He was walking in Madinah looking at the moon when the Prophet (SAWS) appeared from the same direction. While his eyes moved back and forth between the moon and the Prophet's face he finally said, "By Allah, the Prophet is more beautiful than the moon in my eyes."

The third is that of a man who came to Abdullah Ibn-Rawahah, an Arab poet, who was asked to describe the Prophet. He replied, "If you see the Prophet (SAWS) coming from a far distance, you think the sun has just risen." Think of the simile and imagine the Prophet (SAWS) walking here among us. Imagine him hugging you on the Day of Judgment, holding your hand and saying, "You are my neighbor in *Jannah* (paradise)."

Abdullah Ibn-Rawahah's description refers to the life story of the Prophet (SAWS). He was born on the 12th of the month of *Rabi' al-Awwal* at sunrise. Allah chose that moment in particular to indicate that his birth brought illumination to the whole earth.

Question

In the previous episode we mentioned that the miracle of Abraha was the last miracle. This being the case, what about the miracles of the moon cleft *and Al-Israa* and *Al-Mi'raj* (the night journey of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) from Makkah to Jerusalem and his ascension to the seventh Heaven)?

Indeed miracles appeared during the Prophet's life, but they did not change the course of events. They were unlike the staff of Musa (AS) "Moses", the birds of Abraha or the Ark of Nuh (AS) "Noah". The miracles during the Prophet's lifetime were meant to verify his prophethood and support the believers, but they had no influence on events. For example, the angels' descent in the Battle of Badr was a miracle. However, their role was supplementary to the believers' who were the achievers of victory. If the Prophet (SAWS) was a miracle, we would not be able to imitate him. The miracle of each prophet ended with his death, except that of our Prophet (SAWS). The Holy Qur'an was revealed to him to be the doctrine of mankind. The Prophet (SAWS) put plans and worked strenuously within the framework of this doctrine and finally achieved victory as a result. Mankind must follow in his footsteps.

Childhood of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS)

Suckling

The people of Quraysh were used to handing their newborn babies to a Bedouin wet nurse to be brought up by her for two years in the healthy atmosphere of the desert. Parents should take their children in an open air picnic once a week so that the children would be prepared physically and intellectually. Quraysh made a deal with the clan of Banu-Sa'd that the women of the latter breastfeed and raise the children of the former for two years in exchange for a little sum of money and many gifts given by the parents.

These wet nurses looked for the children of the rich to raise. Because Muhammad (SAWS) was an orphan, they refused to take him. One wet nurse, called Halimah, failed to find a baby to care for. Thus, she had to accept Muhammad (SAWS) to be her foster child. This situation was similar to the story of Yusuf (AS) "Joseph" about whom Allah (SWT^[2]) says what can be translated as, **"And they bartered him for a paltry price, (some) numbered dirhams; and they esteemed him lightly (Literally: were of the ascetics, i.e., refused to have anything to do him)" (TMQ, 12:20)**^[3]. Hence, we learn that Allah is the Omnipotent and the Sovereign who humiliates or elevates whomever He decides.

Halimah narrated, "I came to Makkah with other wet nurses seeking for a baby to nurse. As Muhammad (SAWS) was an orphan, all wet nurses refused to take him, but I accepted him because I did not like to return home without a baby. My husband described him as a calm and blessed boy. As soon as I held Muhammad (SAWS) between my arms he suckled from me even though I had not been able to breastfeed and upon doing this my son suckled from my other breast.

"My tribe lived in a barren desert, and our herds used to graze in the desert but return with stomachs empty of milk. When Muhammad (SAWS) arrived, my herd went out to graze and was the only one among all the herds to come back full of milk from which Muhammad (SAWS) and my son were able to drink. When this happened the other herd keepers used to follow my herd to get their share of the blessings. Muhammad (SAWS) brought us prosperity."

The Prophet (SAWS) lived with Halimah for two years during which she noticed that he grew at a very fast rate, and then he returned to his mother. Faithfulness was one of his most obvious characteristics. Fifty five years later and after the conquest of Makkah, Halimah came and stood before the Prophet (SAWS) smiling. He did not recognize her at first, but once he was told that she was his foster mother, he happily welcomed her calling her "my mother" and treated her kindly and modestly.

Another sign of his extreme faithfulness occurred after the Battle of Honayn when the Muslims triumphed over the clan of Hawzan and took many booties. The Prophet (SAWS) was informed that among the booties was his foster brother's property, so he asked his Companions to return them. However, some of his Companions did not agree. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) borrowed some money to buy from those who did not agree the booties belonging to his brother, to return it to him showing his gratefulness to his foster mother. The lesson to be learnt here is the extent of faithfulness we show in our lives. Students should be faithful to their teachers, and one should be faithful and dutiful to his parents and relatives.

Orphanage

Two or three months after his marriage to Amenah Bint-Wahb, Abdullah, the Prophet's father, traveled to Al-Sham (Syria) on business without knowing of his wife's pregnancy. On his way home, he decided to pass by Madinah to visit his uncles. In Madinah, he suddenly became terribly ill, died and was buried there. Thus, it was determined for the Prophet (SAWS) to have roots in Madinah and spread his message there.

Although the Prophet (SAWS) was deprived of the tenderness of a father, he was filled with tenderness and mercy. He used to say to his Companions, "I am like a father to you."[\[4\]](#)

Another example of his tenderness was when he was sitting one day in his house wearing only his trousers and someone knocked on the door. When he knew the knocker was Zaid Ibn-Harithah, he was overwhelmed with joy that he forgot to put on his cloak. He hugged Zaid and kept kissing him on his forehead. Zaid was a real man; he indeed deserved such love. What have you done to deserve the Prophet's love?

Anas narrated that the Prophet (SAWS) saw the women and children (of al-Ansar) coming forward returning from a wedding party. The Prophet stood up and said thrice, "By Allah! You are from the most beloved people to me."[\[5\]](#)

The Prophet (SAWS) lived until he was six years old with his mother and a maid called Umm-Ayman. His mother decided to take him from Makkah to Madinah to visit his father's grave and acquaint him with his father's relatives. Consider his mother's faithfulness to his father! After

cutting a long distance (500 km), they finally reached his father's grave. The visit was engraved in the Prophet's memory forever.

When the Prophet (SAWS) immigrated to Madinah, every tribe wanted him to stay in their houses. He told them to leave his camel and it would kneel down before the house he would stay in. The camel stood before the house of his father's uncles. This is another sign of faithfulness. The Prophet (SAWS) saw his mother faithful to his father, so he learned to be faithful to Halimah. If parents are to teach their children how to be dutiful and faithful to them, they should be faithful to their own parents.

On their way from Madinah to Makkah, his mother Amenah fell sick and died just in front of him in an arid area called *Al-Abw'a*, and Umm-Ayman had to bury her alone. Imagine a boy of six seeing his beloved mother buried! Prophet Muhammad loved his mother so much, many years later he passed by his mother's grave on his way to the Conquest of Makkah and there he stood weeping and weeping, until all the Companions present started weeping too. He was only six years old but was aware of everything happening to him.

Why do you think this was happening to Muhammad (SAWS)? Allah was preparing him to know the reality of death and life. Allah did not want him to be fooled by the very short life on this planet and rather work on his mission. Allah was not harsh when He took his parents away from him. In fact Allah loved Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) so much, and wanted to prepare him very well to lead mankind. There are people who don't realize the value of life and death before the age of 30 and only when losing someone close. There are youth of 20 and 25 years who are not aware of death, but this is how Allah prepared the Prophet (SAWS) so the world would not deceive him later on. Notice that one day after all these events he (SAWS) became extremely famous. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"And did We not raise for you your remembrance?" (TMQ, 94:4)**. When he (SAWS) received this *ayah* he said, "What would I want from this life; I am on this life but a passer by, who sought shelter in the shade of a tree then left it behind and went his own way."[\[6\]](#)

Never be engrossed with the fame or money. Years later when the Prophet (SAWS) was considered among the richest people living, a man once asked him for a herd of sheep that covered the space between two mountains, so the Prophet granted him what he asked for. The man went back to his people and said, "O people convert to Islam! I swear by Allah, Muhammad grants the gifts of someone who does not fear poverty. Thus, Anas said, "When a man converts to Islam not wanting other than what is in this life, as soon as he enters Islam, it becomes dearer to him than life and all its bounties."[\[7\]](#) Hence, the Prophet (SAWS) learned that life was short and death was eminent. His parents died away from their home; this gave him strength and enabled him to lead the Arabs.

Is it possible for people in power today to realize this reality? Imagine a media guru, or a politician, or a business man, working for the purpose of doing what is good for humanity! I know a rich woman who lost her son at a young age. When I asked her what she learned from that situation, she said, "I learnt the reality of life," and she was a woman of fifty. I asked her what was she living for since then and she said, "I am living to do good in this short life."

Another point to consider is that sometimes Allah may do things that may appear to us harmful and painful when in essence there might be huge benefits behind it and vice versa. So Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "... **and it may be that you hate a thing, while (Literally: and) it is most charitable for you; and it may be that you love a thing while (Literally: and) it is evil for you**"(TMQ,2:216).

When they reached Makkah Umm-Ayman took Muhammad (SAWS) to Abdul-Mutalib, his grandfather who was about 90 years old. The Prophet (SAWS) did not feel uncomfortable by staying with his grandfather, because his mother was loyal to her husband, and made him love his father's family. In contrast many parents today, keep their children away from their relatives, though they might need them in the future. If you love your children strengthen their bonds with their relatives, for no one knows what the future is hiding.

Abdul-Mutalib was not a simple man for he was among the leaders of Quraysh. He used to hold a meeting daily at al-K'aba (the sanctified House of Allah), where he used to lay down his gown on the ground and sit over it. He never allowed any one else to share it with him, for he was a leader among his people. The leaders of Quraysh used to attend that meeting to discuss politics, news and, economy of Makkah, with the head of Makkah. Abdul Mutalib used to take the Prophet (SAWS) to these meetings, and was the only one allowed to sit over his gown too. He thought that the Prophet (SAWS), like the kids of his age would go and play, but he (SAWS) never did so. He preferred attending those meetings and listening to their talks. When his grandfather noticed that, he commented to the gathering, "This son of mine will be a great man!"

O! Youths please sit with grown ups, listen to their talks. Their talks will add to your experience and you shall benefit from this experience in the future, as was the case with Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). At that time Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was only acquiring experience and knowledge. I hope the youth today do the same. I hope they can communicate with others and learn and understand the world you live in.

The Prophet (SAWS) stayed with his grandfather until the age of 8, when he witnessed the sudden death of Abdul Mutalib, to be an orphan for the third time. Imagine someone going through all of this! How would he be? He could become unmerciful, or psychologically complicated. Amazingly he (SAWS) did not become so.

In fact he was so merciful which was demonstrated throughout his life, such as when his face was severely injured in the battle of Uhud and still he refused to ask Allah to punish his enemies upon his angry companions' request saying that he was sent as a mercy to mankind. On an earlier occasion the angel of mountains told him that he could collapse two mountains around Makkah on Quraysh if the Prophet (SAWS) wished so and he replied that he was sent as a mercy to mankind, then raised his hands to ask Allah to forgive his people (who were opposing him) for they were unaware of the truth!

There was an ugly looking fellow in Madinah named Zahir, whom the companions disliked dealing with. One day the Prophet (SAWS) entered the market area to see the companions standing together sharing talks, while Zahir was left alone. Then he (SAWS), moved towards him and hugged him from the back. Zahir could not believe that there was some one who was

actually joking with him so he yelled, "Let go of me" then turned around to find that it was the Prophet (SAWS). The Prophet (SAWS) took him from his hand and moved towards the companions joking, "Who would buy a servant." Zahir replied, "I am afraid that no one would buy me." So the Prophet (SAWS) replied, "But you are very precious to Allah." On another occasion his servant's (Anas Ibn Malik) young brother Umair had a bird that died one day and so the Prophet (SAWS) went to his house to give his condolences for the bird, and used to play with the boy in the street to compensate for the loss of his bird. He always tried to compensate for the shortage of affection he had in his childhood by being kind and merciful to those around him.

Before his grandfather died, he asked his son Abu-Taleb to take care of Muhammad (SAWS) after his death. Why Abu-Taleb? Because he was the brother of Abdullah, Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) father, from both the father and mother. Abdul-Mutalib considered Muhammad (SAWS) his son, for he told Abu-Taleb, "I am leaving you responsible for my son."

Notice that Muhammad (SAWS) moved to five places; first was his mother's house and then Halimah's house until he was two years old, then he returned back to his mother's again until he was six years old. The fourth house was his grandfather's house until he was eight years old, and finally he ended up in his uncle's house. Five houses in eight years only! All the houses the Prophet (SAWS) had gone to differed from each other, and he had managed to cope with them all. His uncle had ten children so no one had much time to give to Muhammad (SAWS). Therefore he was brought up illiterate. Then who taught him morals and ethics? Allah did! Why was he transferred from house to house? That was to teach him to be self dependant, be responsible, be serious, be strong, and to have a strong will. These situations gave him the experiences that helped him on his mission later on in life. That's how Allah prepared him. Allah sometimes keeps the good away from you to give it to you later. What the Prophet (SAWS) did not have earlier, he got later.

The strange thing was that in all those hard situations, there was always someone providing him (SAWS) with affection and passion. Allah took from him one source to teach him, but gave him (SAWS) another source of affection and care. He took his mother and gave him (SAWS) his grandfather and his wife Hala, who was the cousin of Amenah, the Prophet's (SAWS) mother. Then He took from him his grandfather to give him his uncle Abu-Talib, who took great care of him. Abu-Taleb did not join Islam, but always supported the Prophet (SAWS). In addition, Fatima-Bint-Asad, Abu-Taleb's wife was also very kind and caring to our Prophet (SAWS). Allah says, **"Did He not find you an orphan, so He gave (you) an abode," (TMQ,93:6).**

If you face hardships then Allah might be preparing you for something great, especially if you are a youth. Allah loves all his prophets but He had to prepare them. For instance, Nuh (AS) "Noah" who was scorn upon by his people, Ibrahim (AS) "Abraham" who was thrown in the fire, Ya'qub (AS) "Jacob" who went blind from sadness for his son, Yusuf (AS) "Joseph" who lost his father and was thrown in a well, Musa (AS) "Moses" who had to leave his country, Isa (AS) "Jesus" who was hurt by his people, and finally Muhammad (SAWS), all of who initially faced hardships and were then relieved.

The Prophet (SAWS) stayed with Abu-Taleb for 25 yrs. He was raised with ten other children out of whom Aquil became one of his greatest enemies, while Jaffar Ibn-Abu-Taleb became one of those closest to him (SAWS). Abu-Taleb was poor, so he did not have much to eat or spend. Later on, when Abu Talib's son Ali became eight years old, the Prophet (SAWS) raised him in gratitude of his Uncle's effort.

After 30 - 50 years, Fatima bint-Asad was buried in Al Biq'a. She was the mother of Ali, and later the mother in law of Fatima al- Zahraa. Consequently the Prophet (SAWS) took off his gown which was the only one he had though it was winter, and wrapped her with it. Before he placed her in grave, he went down in it and lied down then put her in her grave. Why? He wanted to bless her grave with Allah's mercy. Hence it's a story full of faithfulness and loyalty, beginning with Amenah bint-Wahb who was loyal to her husband, and Abu-Taleb who was loyal to his father, and the prophet (SAWS) was loyal to the woman who took good care of him. A person should be loyal to the people who helped him.

On seeing that Abu-Taleb was poor, he (SAWS) decided to work to help his uncle, and not burden him. Therefore Prophet Muhammad worked as a shepherd for a small amount of money. Why did he (SAWS) choose this work? Because sheep and goats would teach him calmness, patience and the skill to gather people. Why sheep and goats, rather than cows and camels? Sheep and goats tend to part from each other, while cows and camels prefer being together. He had to learn how to gather them all together again. He worked as a shepherd from the age of 8 to 15. Then he wished to change his job to a better one. He wanted to become a trader, therefore he asked to join his uncle on his trade trip to Syria. O! Unemployed youth, can you see how the Prophet was looking for jobs, here and there, to work and succeed? He worked as a trader from the age of 15 to 35 years old. From trading he learned the art of communication, and understood more about peoples' different personalities. The traders are the best people, who can judge others by looking in their eyes. Can our youth follow the Prophet's (SAWS) school? Do you remember the story of Yusuf (AS), when he learned from the king of Egypt wisdom and other skills that helped him later on. This is the most important lesson today. The Prophet's (SAWS) experience was acquired through hard work!

The Prophet (SAWS) learned many skills from his jobs, yet there was something missing which he had to learn. Fighting skills! Well Allah planned for that too, because when he was 15 years old a war took place between Quraysh and another tribe during the Holy months so they called that war the Battle of Fojar (the unholy battle). He fought in that war and learned the skill of fighting too. Soon after the war, the two tribes signed a peace treaty called *Hilf al-Fodool*, hence he also learnt how to negotiate for peace.

A strong generation will not be raised only by being religious, or wanting nothing except being in the mosque, and seeing the good face of life. The Prophet (SAWS) was well prepared. He who was to rule and guide mankind was a trader, and understood life well. He also understood war and peace issues. I urge every youth who wants to improve his country to prepare himself from today, to learn, work hard, read, meet people and be aware of the issues of today

[1] SAWS=*Sala-llahu Alaihi Wa-Sallam* = All Prayers and Peace of Allah be upon him.

[2] SWT=*Suahanahu wa Ta'ala* = Glorified and Exalted Be He.

[3] TMQ=Translation of the Meaning of the Qur'an. This translation is for the realized meaning, so far, of the stated (Surah:Ayah) of the Qur'an. Reading the translated meaning of the Qur'an can never replace reading it in Arabic, the language in which it was revealed.

[4] Sahih Muslim book 31

[5] Sahih Al-Bukhari book 58

[6] Narrator: Abdullah Ibn-Massud - Al Alabani collection of true Ahadith

[7] Narrator: Anas Ibn-Malik, True Hadith, Source: Sahih Muslim, al-masnad as-Sahih

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